

Course Outline for Communication in Small Groups

Dept. of Communication Studies
COMM 240

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Office Hours: Mon. 330 pm – 5 pm; Weds. 330 pm – 430 pm;
Fri. 100 pm – 230 pm; Or by appt.

Meetings: Sect. 1 - M, W, F (12:10 – 1 pm) – LA 306
Sect. 2 - M, W, F (11:10 am – Noon) – GBB L04

Required Text

Harris, Thomas E., and John C. Sherblom. *Small Group and Team Communication*. 5th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2011. (Custom book; also online @ coursemart.com; \$41.60)

Fisher, Roger, and William Ury. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In*. New York: Penguin, 1991. (Amazon = \$6.49 new; \$0.01 used)

Required readings will be available on Blackboard or distributed in class.

General Description

This course is designed to help you understand the dynamics of small group interaction. We will explore group integration through process, constitutive, and hermeneutic approaches to communication (e.g., narrative and fantasy-theme). Through analysis, participation, criticism, and creation, you will gain insight into the ways in which small group dynamics work on a creative communicative level. Ultimately, I want you to become a better group participant and facilitator of effective group collaboration. With the rise of interdependent working environments, this course will help you enter into your chosen field as a better manager of group relationships.

Course Goals: By the end of this course, students will

- be able to reflect on group processes and use theory to guide your group-oriented interactions (*in situ*);
- become better participants in group interactions;
- have an increased appreciation of their creative capacities while working in groups;
- understand ways to use conflict creatively;
- be willing to consider the potentialities and limitations of group work.

Methods of Instruction

- Lecture
- Discussions
- Intensive reading
- Group work
- In-class activities
- Presentations

Course Policies

Attendance: I expect that students will learn from each other. This requires that students come to class ready to participate in a discussion about the assigned readings. Your participation (or lack of) in discussions will be noted and evaluated. In addition to discussions, we may have some in-class activities (including quizzes) that will help you to explore and share your knowledge, experience, and resources with colleagues.

Blackboard: In an effort to reduce student/university expenses and environmental waste, this course will conduct most of its document distribution via Blackboard. You **MUST** have a Blackboard user name, know how to use Blackboard, have a functioning email address, and have access to a computer with a word processor and Adobe Acrobat Reader. Assignment guidelines will **ONLY** be uploaded to Blackboard. Some student work may be submitted to Blackboard in Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf). These assignments will be returned with instructor feedback as a PDF document. (<https://onestop.umt.edu/>)

Writing: Professional success in organizations demands quality writing. The quality of your writing, therefore, matters. Improving your writing is part of the content of this course. Evaluation of your writing includes assessments of presentation outlines, paper organization, sentence structure, word choices, typographical mistakes, spelling, and basic grammatical errors. If you feel, or we discover, that you have trouble writing up to the standards required for this course, please consider consulting with a tutor at the UM Writing Center (Liberal Arts 144, 406.243.2266, growl@mso.umt.edu). You must work with a tutor at the UM Writing Center if I ask you to do so.

for additional resources visit the UM website → (<http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter/>)

Academic Dishonesty: I welcome you to this classroom community with the assumption that the work you do will be your own. However, distinguishing your work from the work of another can be tricky at times, for both you and your instructor. You should know that presenting another's work as your own, even if by accident, is a serious violation of the *University of Montana Student Conduct Code*, which identifies the following, among other things, as acts of academic misconduct: "Plagiarism: Representing another person's words, ideas, data, or materials as one's own; ... Submitting false information: Knowingly submitting false, altered, or invented information, data, quotations, citations, or documentation in connection with an academic exercise; ... Submitting work previously presented in another course: Knowingly making such submission in violation of stated course requirements..." (p. 6).

University Policies Available @ → (http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php)

Please do not eat food or use attention-deficit and cancer-producing devices.

Reasonable Accommodation:

The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

Assignments & Grading Policy:

All assignments will receive a raw numerical score, but I cannot know these in advance of teaching the course. Contingencies arise during the course of a semester. Under my grading regime, I start with general weights for activities, which I use to calculate final grades.

Activities / Assignments	% of Final Grade
Exams	45%
In-class participation / activities	25%
Group project and presentation	30%
	100%

Grades will be assigned on the following scale: 94% and above = A; 93-88% = A-; 87-86% = B+; 85-83% = B; 82-78% = B-; 77-76% = C+; 75-73% = C; 72-68% = C-; 67-66% = D+; 65-63% = D; 62-58% = D-; 57% and below = F.

Brief Explanation of Assignments

In-class activities: We'll have a variety of in-class activities to help you discuss, describe, and learn key concepts. These activities include, but are not limited to group work, short quizzes, and brief student presentations. You are required to complete assigned reading *before* coming to class. On the assigned *Getting to Yes* days, you are required to bring the book with you.

Exams: We'll have two exams in this course--a midterm and a final. The midterm will be between 30 and 50 questions. The final exam will be an 80-question cumulative test. I will create questions from both texts and in-class discussions.

Group projects and presentation: You are required to write a short, group-authored research paper and present your findings to the class. In this paper, you will use fantasy-theme analysis to analyze a group practice. You will begin work on this paper in week three and have approximately eight weeks to complete your research, write and revise a paper, and present your work to the class. I will outline the grading structure for this activity on the assignment prompt. Please refer to the prompt and the course policies above for writing requirements and expectations.

Course Reading Schedule (Tentative) -- PT = Primary textbook. G2Y = *Getting to Yes*. See BB = See Blackboard

Week 1 (Jan. 24, 26, 28): Introductions / Would humans do better without groups?

Mon. = Introductions; Weds. = See BB; Fri. = See BB

Week 2 (Jan. 31, Feb. 2, 4): Defining small groups, studying groups as texts, pt. 1

Mon. = PT, pp. 1-22 Weds. = See BB; Fri. = See BB

Week 3 (Feb. 7, 9, 11): Defining small groups, studying groups as texts, pt. 2

Mon. = See BB Weds. = See BB; Fri. = See BB

Week 4 (Feb. 14, 16, 18): Small group communication: A system of interaction

Mon. = PT, pp. 23-40 Weds. = See BB; Fri. = G2Y, pp. 1-14.

Week 5 (Feb. 21, 23, 25): Norms, Role, Cohesion and Groupthink

No class Monday - Washington-Lincoln Day Holiday; Weds. = PT, pp. 41-56; Fri: G2Y, pp. 15-39

Week 6 (Feb. 28, Mar. 2, 4): Group process and presentation techniques, pt. 1

Mon. = 115-136 Weds. = See BB; Fri. = G2Y, pp. 40-55.

Week 7 (Mar. 7, 9, 11): Computer-mediated Small Group Comm.

Mon. = PT, pp. 163-184; Weds. = See BB; Fri. = G2Y, pp. 56-80.

Week 8 (Mar. 14, 16, 18): Leadership in small groups; Diversity in groups and creativity

Mon. = PT, pp. 137-162 Weds. = PT, pp. 57-74; Fri. = G2Y, pp. 81-94.

Week 9 (Mar 21, 23, 25): Midterm

Mon. = Midterm Exam; Weds. = Discuss Midterm Fri. = Activity, no assigned reading

Week 10 (Mar. 28, 30, April 1): Decision making and problem solving and conflict

Mon. = PT, pp. 95-114; Weds. = See BB; Fri. = G2Y, pp. 95-106.

Week 11 (April 4, 6, 8): SPRING BREAK -- No class -- Spring Vacation

Week 12 (April 11, 13, 15): Listening and feedback

Mon. = PT, pp. 75-94 Weds. = See BB; Fri. = G2Y, pp. 107-128.

Week 13 (April 18, 20, 22): Presentation preparation week

Mon. = See BB; Weds. = See BB; Fri. = G2Y, pp. 129-144.

Week 14 (April 25, 27, 29): Presentations

Mon. = Pres., Group 1; Weds. = Pres., Group 2; Fri. = Pres., Group 3

Week 15 (May 2 & 4): Presentations

Mon. = Pres., Group 4; Weds. = Pres., Group 5; Fri. = Evaluations

Week 16 (May 9 & 11): Finals Week

Final Exam, Sect. 1 = Tuesday, May 10 @ 10:10-12:10; Final Exam, Sect. 2 = Monday, May 9 @ 10:10-12:10